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# THE ENERGY OF AMERICAN CROWD MUSIC

By T. CARL WHITMER

## PROLOGUE: OUR COMPOSERS AND OUR CROWDS

**A**MERICAN composers have been so self-disciplined that they have missed the cue of the world. Even now we are so artistically reticent or intellectually snobbish that our large output of ladylike works tied with baby ribbon is entirely out of proportion to our other qualities, so elemental for the most part.

The "timidity of our courage," or whatever you wish to call it, is so considerable that we must have missed something. We now are making an effort to find this something—this vital cue—by trying to follow the words of Walt Whitman: Chant Me the Poem that comes from the Soul of America.

Naturally we have asked, What shall we chant? What shall we write? For, when we write small things they—the critics, anybody—say unto us, Write big things. Having written big things they say, Wherefore write you not that which is easily produced? When we are serious they say, You are heavy. When we are light we are told that frivolity becometh not our ambition. If we are original we are told that it certainly is not national. It surely is French or Russian inspiration. If, perchance, we write in quintuple time we are asked whether duple time is not more natural and we are informed that we are forcing our individuality and that our work is the result of a mental attitude. If we are simple in our outpourings we are using over again the things which already have been said simply, and are told the age is a complex one.

Then, too, we have to decide by some method what is national. We recognise that it is easier for small Ireland, for example, to have an art called national than for the United States. If the United States were only Kentucky or California our art at once would be stamped as distinctive. It will take the world at large a long time to label us. Perhaps we had better find ourselves first and pay no attention to labels by outsiders. If we object to the word national and say that the modern impulse will lead

us rather to the international our problems seem to become yet greater. But, at bottom, if we are quite human we shall be both national and international. Everything we see, hear, feel, experience in any way becomes subject matter for music, poetry, painting and sculpture. The things seen and heard in Kentucky or New England or the Ozarks become material for use. But, it is not the Indian, the Negro, the Western or the Eastern which is national; only the worked out and thoroughly assimilated knowledge and feelings with these varied materials which form the basis for inspiration. From the local and provincial and sectional come coupled a thousand impressions from the world music, a new way of stating things in a large manner. The provincial gives us an impression and an impulse and acts as a fundamental for a national voice. We need not speculate on what is national. All we need is just to live, move and have our musical being along with our fellows. If we are distinctly ourselves, quite human and heartful, our music is American. As David Grayson put it in his book: "Yes, I said, if one could only see this Hempfield of ours as it really is, all the poetry of it, all the passion of it, all the dullness and mediocrity, all the tragedy of failure, all that is in the hearts and souls of these common people—what a thing it would be! How it would stir the world!" There is one thing which is healthily characteristic of the American composer who is trying to find his country's voice. That is, he is comparing himself with the greatest on earth. Nothing else satisfies him. No critic is half so hard on him as he is on himself. And this American composer need not be afraid to write in the simple, modern or ultra-modern manner so long as it is natural to him. Ultra-modernism or simplicity has little to do with permanence any more than a particular method used in playing has to do with the more vital issues of greatness.

Undoubtedly our art must eventually be a wider emotional product than that of any other nation. Feeling this, we may be too serious. If that is so, we should loosen up and not have light opera too light and serious opera too heavy.

Unfortunately there is, to quote Arthur Farwell, no national art-sentiment to throw its vast force behind any American who composes. But this art-sentiment of ours, when it comes, will unquestionably be formed upon the basis of what the American composer can achieve with the material at his disposal—the wonderful plastic power of the masses, or crowds of the American people.

We know that "the scholarship of the world has never made enough of the crowd. Nor have the master classes in any of the

arts or in trade ever done it. Nor has the crowd itself done it. In fact, the crowd has belittled itself. Yet all starts with the crowd. You can't get away from it. Because the crowd is fundamental. For after all even the top men in the crowd are of, by and for the crowd, whether they know it or not. You can't get rid of the crowd by climbing on its back and vaunting your superiority" (Traubel).

Most writers talk about the crowd and crowd-music as if we were but now discovering it. In a sense that is true. But, at bottom and outside of some recent applications, it is a revival and not a discovery. Our old Singing Schools were precisely the same things. If we here in America had been simple enough and possessed of primitive instead of an ultra-sophisticated observation, we should have noticed our frequent group formations and given them something to do musically worth while all through the century.

A glance at music and general history will show you the stuff of which crowds are made and out of which they always have been made. Music is now being applied to such crowds in a way never done before. The crowd is the instrument, not only of observation—that is, the audience—but it is the instrument itself—this instrument which is being made and tuned so we can play on it; the instrument which will play for the world in the time to come.

#### RISE OF FOLK-SONG POWER

Not the least interesting phase of present folk-song in all countries is that it is being used to whip into shape composers' thoughts. We have become quite obsessed with this form of economy of effort. So, we utilise all possible material and behold! it blossoms like the rose. We have all imaginable kinds of instrumental and vocal music based on Negro and Indian themes, Irish jigs, Russian and Norwegian folk-song and dance without end and therein the world finds the special artistic functioning of this folk-music. It acts as a stimulant, as appetizer for the world to the temporary cutting off of works originally generated. But, Arnold Dolmetsch points out an important truth when he says that it is "not by pressing a few old English tunes into a work that might be French or German, or by disguising popular tunes with incongruous harmonies that the English school"—or any other—"will be revived"—or created, as the case may be. We hope, however, that as the chorale made Bach and German

music, so the modern folk-song habit is bringing out the best—perhaps sometimes the worst—of our modern writers. At least something is coming out, thank Heaven!

### POPULAR MUSIC

The music of the streets is not necessarily fundamental or of the crowd essence because it seems to emanate from the crowd. Lots of things pretend to come from the crowd which are only purchased by the crowd—often possessed of mere childish tastes. The actual spurring on of sales is brought about in commercial offices. *The crowd buying and the crowd creating are two essentially different things.* For the crowd when it purchases likes to have somebody else think for it and boom its playthings hard. There is a great deal of bosh written and spoken about the crowd—the beloved crowd—always being correct in its instincts. It may be correct when it is at its best, but the crowd nods frequently from mere inertia due to its own clumsy bulk.

The result is that not one out of five thousand works of the popular stamp is really folk-song. It is song foisted by promoters who have the most commercial of instincts back of the foisting.

The distinction is clear, perfectly clear, to most readers. The popular is usually the topical. Like some of the topical songs, it has a thousand verses and they all die with the topic.

### CHORALES, HYMNS AND GOSPEL HYMNS

A few lines about this large phase of the crowd music seems *à propos* at this point. The church everywhere since Reformation days has been the seat of community singing.

The chorales created the highest type of artist-music. (Alas! the successors of the chorale are very weak-kneed specimens.)

The chorales are full of the crowd feeling, a kind of objective feeling which spells power.

The Gospel Hymns specially designed for crowd expression have no noise, a factor making for their transitory character.

The chorales have variety of the larger rhythm as well as interest of the specific meters.

The Gospel Hymns have swing, but it is the swing of a few lines, not of the whole mass. They are monotonous in the larger rhythms and have a tendency to stereotype easily. They have no interesting rhythmic basis which makes works germinate. They are childless.

There are a number of reasons why the community singing of nearly all congregations is the most dolefully anemic thing which could be imagined; why the church crowd is without the urge and energy of the street crowd. One of these reasons is that the demand for better words has given us more thought in our hymns than a large group can carry when they sing. You know brains in lyrics are at the present time singularly destructive of pure vocalisation, especially when the thought constantly changes. We really think rather than sing the best words. That is, the intellectual pulls back genuine power of song. It is needless to say that this reason for poor singing is limited to only a few churches of advanced stamp.

Another reason more broadly holding good is that there are too many small variations in hymn harmonisations. So different in detail are many of the hymns that one is no sooner launched on, say, the bass part, before you—the bass singer—discover that things are not going well and you drop out discouraged. In other words, the arrangers have several times changed your part in a given hymn in the interest of simplicity or complexity or history or something else and have arranged you out of it. Until there is either established uniformity or unison singing, our music in the churches will remain urgeless and non-expressive.

#### A SHORT TALK ABOUT TALKING MACHINES

The nasal impudence of the phonograph has passed. *Requiescat in pace.* A new quality is here. Even it will have to be improved. We are arriving, however, in spite of handicaps of materials.

The greatest force of the talking machine is the democratising and educational influence. The world has been having its teaching done in the past by a man for a few men. Now it is being done by a man or machine for multitudes. We think in communities, in large groups. We are getting the superman habit and are never satisfied—as was God of old—with but two or three which happen to gather together. We are mortals and therefore reckless with our legions.

Not only does the enormous output of machines stagger our imagination, but when one begins to estimate the variety of uses to which these instruments are put we know that we are in the golden age of education—golden equally to the seller and the buyer. Read the following circular issued by the Department of Fine Arts of the University of Arkansas and you will get a glimpse

at the astonishingly endless vistas brought out by the phonographic imagination.

#### MORE AND BETTER MUSIC FOR ARKANSAS

The desire for a true understanding of music is strong in many communities where, for lack of proper leadership and a knowledge of how to gain this understanding, the desire must remain unsatisfied. It is just these communities the Department of Fine Arts wishes to aid.

For this purpose, it will send to any club or school that has or can borrow a Talking Machine, four sets of fifteen records each, to be used for instructive purposes, each set of records being accompanied by a typewritten "talk" explaining the music about to be heard, and giving a few interesting facts regarding its origin, the instruments, the singers, etc. Each set of fifteen records will provide a complete entertainment for one evening.

The talks are entirely informal and devoid of technical terms and, while educational, are primarily for the purpose of making the music understandable and therefore more enjoyable. When a song is sung in a foreign language a translation will be found in the "talk."

In short, every effort has been made to aid intelligent listening to music and to give a liberal amount of instruction along with a fine entertainment.

We ask that you give these entertainments in the evening so that parents as well as children may attend; that no admittance fee be charged; that you use care in unpacking and packing the records to avoid breaking or scratching; that you pay transportation expenses on the records, which will be sent you collect; that you send them collect to the address which will be furnished you by the Department of Fine Arts.

The arrangement for these four entertaining and instructive evenings will bring children and parents together to the school or club; will interest the parents in all phases of your work; and will make more effective and efficient your endeavor to take part in the great movement of Community music and music appreciation.

#### MOVIE MUSIC

Music used with moving pictures is, on the whole, better—much better—than music used with the spoken drama. The "spoken theatre" has old traditions. The movie made its own traditions at the start and decided in favor of the finer things. When a government report gives ten millions of people patronising film productions every week in this gigantic country of ours, we can easily see the force of the music end for good or ill. Everything within the realm of the world's best music is served to movie audiences. It is interesting to observe that the introduction of good music in such theatres has in every reported case been followed by a larger attendance and greater gate receipts.

Then, too, there exists a new type of music adaptation. I refer to the so-called ticketing of emotions which is practiced in theatres which have a large library. That is, the music is listed according to mood, not according to title.

We have also the matter of extemporisation by organists in these places. It is horribly crude just now, but with the higher kind of organists in establishments which handle pictures on a huge scale we hope to see a type evolved which will bring a new appropriateness into our pictures, a new and more vital relation of phonographic films and musical moods.

Original music created for certain works naturally is the only legitimate art product for moving pictures and promises to bring a new variety of musical structure into existence. This type will show not the usual picturing of every detail, from a dog barking and a cat mewing (*via the vox humana!*) to the jumps of a lively horse, but will show the essential moods governing the pictures as a whole, not a few childish peculiarities of a single picture.

#### CONCERNING MUNICIPAL MUSIC, THE URGE OF THE TIMES

At the end of July, 1916, the writer took occasion to analyse the programs given by bands under municipal control in the parks of his city. This analysis was published August 2nd in the largest Pittsburgh newspaper.

So interested and generally stirred up did the city become over the question—an interesting symptom in itself—that within two weeks the present writer, backed by the Musicians' Club, effected a change which placed programs, hitherto at the bottom of the list of cities, very far towards the top. It was one of those times when everything was ripe. This ripening of public sentiment is one of the most encouraging things in American life—this maturing of the sense about city affairs. The people are no longer the mob, but the people are the real executives. And all this is preparation for the better community life.

And what is this big thing we secured in the summer of 1916 but the people's chance to hear better things; a chance to hear things which only the wealthy heretofore have been able to pay for. These things are now common property. Some of us acted for the people in place of several bandmasters who thought that they would keep their jobs by so-called catering, by serving up trash as principal numbers on programs which were a musical and sociological disgrace.

In this connection it is of considerable interest to read the following statement at the end of a summer in a leading journal of the country:

Pittsburgh's series of park concerts arranged at the expense of the city (\$10,000 for the Summer) are at an end. During the season of about two months about three hundred thousand persons attended them, the largest crowds appearing at those in which announcement was made that the people were to be given an opportunity to decide whether they liked classical or the so-called popular music the better. It sustained its reputation by showing as much taste for the good as for the trashy stuff.

I would also say that the late Director of the Department of Public Works, Robert Swan, told me at the close of the Summer, "Our bandmasters have had an increased pride in their work since they knew the public were looking up to them and watching their movements." Not a bad example of the power of the people. Surely all citizens deserve the best they can understand, the common garden variety of excellence.

Objection is sometimes made that city bands are too small for good music. That condition in itself needs investigation, for it often is the result of a political basis of distributing favors in numbers rather than quality. But even then there is good music for every reasonable combination of instruments and for many very unreasonable combinations.

There are also objectors to a good standard, but a few objectors to better music do not constitute "the people" by a large majority. Their chief argument is that these park concerts are not intended to be educational. Such remarks hark back to less progressive times than these; to times when municipal control was exclusively political and cared naught for higher questions. Are there people in authority in our large cities who still believe that entertainment precludes that which is worth while? I have cited the music used by the organists in our large, popular-priced moving picture shows. It is largely of the best. Note also the music used in the settlements of the cities. Most of it by preference, not "education," is good music.

We would say to believers in the non-education theory: You need only to look over several parts of our small earth to discover that education, whether concealed or openly announced, is the watchword—certainly America's watchword. Do not fear to raise the crowd. The crowd is much more plastic than you think.

Certainly, it is plainly our "duty to see what ought to be desired by the people and to use all plain and brave speech and action to bring others to that desire" (Curtis). Furthermore, it is a minority which will first see to this; for there is always an influential minority, as Theodore Thomas put it, back of every good thing. (Also every bad thing is governed by a few.) His words pay reproduction in this connection, as no one interested in popularising good music can ever forget the Thomas methods. This is what he had to say:

The clamor for so-called popular music makes it impossible to present a good program without the support of this "influential minority," and yet a person who clamors for popular music does not know that he means only familiar music; that Beethoven's symphonies would soon become as popular to him as "The Star Spangled Banner" if he only heard them oftener, and that it is only his unfamiliarity with the great classic masterpieces which prevents his enjoyment of them. Good music, of which a Beethoven symphony is the highest expression, is the language of the soul. Popular music, in the true definition of the term, is the expression of rhythm, such as a Strauss waltz. If people only knew it, a Beethoven symphony, like a Shakespeare drama, creates a distinct atmosphere, even a world of its own, but its secret beauties are not to be wholly revealed without a little effort on the part of the listener to appreciate them."

#### WHAT IS GOOD MUSIC?

Not long ago a newspaper man said to some of us: "Now tell me what good music is. What cheap music is. I, too, want a viewpoint when I hear a program given for the people in the parks."

That is a fair question, but it is quite certain that we have our hands full when we attempt to tell the average non-musical man some way to decide what is good music for the crowd. We may recognise it, but how label it without being technical? In other words, without being "high-brows."

It is not always possible on first hearing to tell the good from the bad because of some superficial resemblance, just as the texture of stuffs in fine imitations may be misleading to the average buyer. But there are several ear-marks which bear noting.

One thing to be observed is that titles are absolutely necessary to poor music. Such music would not get very far without a label. Good music of course often has titles, but its life is not dependent upon them. In the case of cheap music the vulgar title and the sentimental title are much in evidence; for the

"crush," the squeeze, the moonlight tendencies, the sob and the overworked mother spirit are always salable. By their titles shall ye know them!

Good music, when gay, will be really gay and frolicsome rather than smack of vaudeville or fox trot. If sentimental it will be free from over-doneness or mawkishness.

The orchestration of good music will have variety of color in all the divisions of the standard orchestra or band. The cheap kind will be varied mostly by drummers' traps. Drums, xylophones, clappers, fifes with "glittering counterpoint"—all these will make up the gaiety of tin and tinsel. That is, poor music is overdressed and overspiced.

Good music is solidly built, as will be noticed on second or third hearing. Cheap music will be either in very common usual, conventional form or altogether out of plumb. As a rule, common music is correct in the sense of mere measurements. It could not so easily be grasped at one hearing otherwise. The good will have a new structure as well as other original traits of novel harmony, unusual rhythms and distinctive turns to the melodies.

The good music is based on a greater chord variety. The poor is built over a groundwork of but three or four chords and these are in evidence in every piece.

What first strikes the layman in all good music of the art-class is what he likes to call its queerness. It soon loses that character on repetition, but, inevitably, good music will be somewhat puzzling at first and the uninitiated hearer will take it on suspicion.

Good music has brains back of it. Poor music is mainly instinctive and hence goes 'round in a circle. Ordinary pieces are like so many ordinary people, exact duplicates one of the other. The parrot theory is overworked. Good music is based on several melodies at once. The poor is mighty glad to boast one at a time, although in recent years there has been great improvement in this line.

#### WHAT MANY CITIES ARE DOING

Some time ago I sent out questionnaires to the mayors of many large cities and a few of the smaller ones in this country and Canada in order to discover the status of summer out-door music. Some of the questions were designed for local use and hence many answers are not vital to our present discussion.

The following is a summary of the most interesting and valuable answers<sup>1</sup>:

*Philadelphia*, with 1,850,000 people, gives \$30,000 a Summer. It has two bands, giving 90 and 72 concerts respectively, and at one time had dancing in the streets at certain appointed places, to the great joy and value of the city. There is a supervisor for the programs and popular music is played as encores.

*Kansas City*, with 300,000 people, appropriates \$3,500 a season. About thirty-seven concerts are given. The people sing to some extent. Programs are published in the papers and also handed out to the audience.

*Montreal, Canada*, with 650,000 people, has five bands, with no supervisor of programs, which are very mixed in nature. The city appropriates only \$2,000; about twenty-five concerts are given. The people seldom sing.

*Quebec, Canada*, with about 80,000 people, gives \$3,000, has seven bands, presents one hundred concerts. People sing seldom, and programs are badly mixed, not having any supervising body.

*Madison, Wis.*, is a place of 25,000 people. \$325 is given by the city. For this five band concerts are given, with mixed programs and no singing.

*Minneapolis* has 375,000 people. It gives \$16,000, presents one hundred and twenty-two concerts, has nominally a supervising committee to insure good programs. Two rehearsals each week are allowed each band. The programs have several unique features. One is the presentation with soloists of operas, such as last season *Aida* and *Faust*. The people as a whole do not sing. This seems to be the prevailing condition so far as concerns the national anthems. Whose fault is it?

At the bottom of the programs is the seemingly strange request, *ENJOY YOUR PARKS*. Even this sign or slogan is one of the signs of the times. We are just beginning to be a people who believe we deserve to enjoy everything, for it is ours, not some impersonal city's.

*Louisville, Ky.*, with a population of 400,000, has no appropriation, no "nothing" in a municipal way. Its enterprises are driven by private club forces.

*Omaha, Neb.*, with 190,000 people, gives \$4,000 a year. For this sum two bands furnish fifty or more concerts during the Summer. The

<sup>1</sup>The Union rates for bands are different from the rates for orchestral players; but the scales of prices for both kinds of players are so complex, covering so many varieties of engagements, that the figures for the different cities given above must not be taken as a basis for the computation of incomes and rates of American bandsmen. Naturally, season rates are somewhat lower than rates for one special time. Rates differ, also, according to whether the engagement is afternoon or evening; cost of second hour is different from first hour; marching and "settin' still" differ in price, dances and educational institutions cost not the same; etc., etc., etc., up to a twelve page pamphlet. If any person interested will write the author or consult the nearest Union bandsman he will receive answer at once. It takes a book to answer by letter and thirty minutes' time to explain by word of mouth. It may be added that in all cases the bandsmen are able to take many outside engagements during the period of their city work because relatively little time outside of the actual two-hour band concert is required, the rehearsals in most cases being very brief affairs, mostly "synthetic" rehearsals.

programs are not supervised and so are badly mixed. The people sing to some extent, let us add.

*Boston* has 725,000 people. The city gives \$9,000, for which the people receive 75 band concerts, with mixed programs. Last year there were nine bands giving forth more or less mixed programs. The programs are announced by megaphone, presumably without any Bostonese annotations.

*Rochester* has 251,000 folks of all sorts. \$15,472 were devoted to music. There is one park band, with its director the final arbiter as to quality. From 78 to 90 concerts are given. The national airs are not sung with any particular gusto.

*Cincinnati, O.*, with its 406,000 people, gives only \$1,300 from taxes, although a goodly sum from private donations.

Programs are given out by ushers. There are about 57 concerts with good or much mixed programs, according to the "section" of city. The people sing very seldom.

*Chicago* does not handle "the music end" of things at all, the music in the parks being dealt out by park commissioners, who are state, not city, officers. The wording of the one answering my letter was, "Chicago is not in the music business." Quite a commentary on Chicago.

*Cleveland, O.*, with 800,000 people, gives but \$9,000, has bands of but 20 to 25 men, gives 150 concerts each season, and has mixed programs according to "locality."

*Denver*, with but 250,000 people, gives \$20,500 a season, has one band of 50 pieces, gives 108 concerts, has a supervisor, furnishes free programs and has popular singing.

*Buffalo*, with its 465,000 people, has two concerts each evening for eight weeks. Its programs are popular and the singing element seems to remain silent. Appropriation \$7,200.

*Detroit*, with 850,000 people, gives \$11,000 for its one band, giving mixed programs. People do not sing with the band.

*Indianapolis* has 300,000 people. There has been no appropriation with any regularity. There was a fund of quite small proportions, so that one concert could be given each week. No programs and no singing. Bad showing.

*St. Louis* has 800,000 people. \$17,000 was given last season. The bands have from 25 to 30 men each. About 145 concerts were given, with no singing. The city had printed programs.

The last two cities of general interest are Baltimore and New York, and these are so very interesting that I shall let the answers go to my readers as they came to me. First, I would say that Baltimore has a municipal journal which is sent to about 12,000 carefully selected people, to keep them abreast of all the work being done by the city. The city authorities naturally have their "own time," as is seen by the following excerpt from their very interesting journal, which suggests an ever-present difficulty in community work:—

Why is it that every time a movement semi-public in its nature is started, the people at large applaud the movement and then sit down and wait for the municipal government to do it all? There are some movements where the responsibility falls distinctly and properly on the shoulders of the municipal government, but there are some things this government cannot do single-handed. The government may do its part in all of its fullness; and yet, if the people at large fail to respond with an equal degree of performance, the undertaking will prove an utter failure.

Baltimore is also municipally managing its own symphony orchestra and the following account of how its singing and some matters of detail—as a band stand—are managed is highly edifying.

There were two community singing concerts at Washington Square and one in conjunction with the centenary exercises at the Battle Monument. At these concerts the airs of folk-songs were played by the band and the words thrown upon a screen so that the audience could join in the singing. Printed programs were distributed. The season opened May 26th and closed September 13th. Eighty-one concerts were given. The approximate attendance during the season was 300,000.

The stand for the band was designed by John F. Ireton, Superintendent Highways, Engineer's Department, and was built by the Highways Engineer's Department. It is mounted on wheels, so that it can be transferred by automobile truck from the city property yard along with the chairs, lights and other equipment. This stand has a floor space of 500 square feet, giving ample room for the band of thirty pieces. Chairs are hired to the audience at five cents each, and this revenue, added to the receipts for ice-cream and pop-corn privileges, produced a total revenue of \$556.45 in 1915. The net cost of the concerts last season, including salaries of musicians, cost of stand, equipment and other incidentals, was \$9,993.69.

And now to the specific questions put to, and answers from, this very much alive city.—

- 1 Name of City—Baltimore, Md.
- 2 Population, 1916—589,620.
- 3 What percentage foreign? by Census 1910, 13.8% foreign born white.
- 4 What appropriation this year for bands? a. \$11,520 for Park Band; b. \$10,000 for Municipal Band.
- 5 How many bands? Two, one the Park Band, and the other the Municipal Band.
- 6 How much are Conductors of bands paid? \$40.00 per week conductor of Park Band, which gives seven concerts a week. \$36.00 per week conductor of Municipal Band, which gives six concerts a week.
- 7 Do you think a large band under one Conductor for chief occasions, split up into two bands for small parks practicable? No.
- 8 Have you a supervisor or supervising committee to pass on quality of programs? No; but the Park Board keeps in touch with all

the activities of the Park Band, and the Mayor and Board of Estimates with the Municipal Band.

- 9 How many band concerts each season? Park Band, 111 concerts. Municipal Band, 97 concerts.
- 10 How many rehearsals are provided for? The bands rehearse once a week.
- 11 Is popular music used in regular program or only encores? Both.
- 12 How many men in Musical Union? All the musicians are members of the Musical Union.
- 13 Do the people sing when bands are playing "America," or "Star Spangled Banner?" Yes.
- 14 How do you get programs or program notes into the hands of the people? The newspapers gladly print each day's program in the news columns.
- 15 Is a Municipal Band, a permanent organization, preferable to hiring several bands? Yes.

(Signed) **JAMES F. THRIFT,**  
*Comptroller.*

#### CONCERNING NEW YORK CITY.

No city to which my questionnaire went took the trouble to answer so fully and interestingly as the City of New York. I shall set down in full what the Acting Commissioner of Parks, Robert W. Valentine, placed in his reply.

The Mayor of this City has referred your questionnaire of September 8th, to the Department of Parks, Boroughs of Manhattan and Richmond. The answers to your questions are as follows:—

- 1 Boroughs of Manhattan and Richmond, New York City.
- 2 The population of Manhattan and Richmond, by the latest police census, was respectively—Manhattan, 2,590,455—Richmond, 102,614.
- 3 We have no statistics to show what proportion of the population is "foreign."
- 4 The appropriation for band music in parks of Manhattan and Richmond this year was \$23,207.
- 5 This Department employed during the present season one band in Central Park, and four bands in the smaller parks of the City, giving each band an average of four concerts a week for eight weeks in the smaller parks, and two concerts in Central Park per week. Owing to the summoning to the Mexican border of the First Regiment Field Artillery, that Regiment Band, which had been engaged for the Central Park concerts, was unable to fulfil its engagement. Pending arrangements with Nahan Franko's band, several conductors were tried in Central Park. The final concerts were given by Nahan Franko.
- 6 Conductors of the concerts in Central Park received \$25 per concert, which included \$10 for conducting rehearsals. Conductors of other bands received \$10 per concert. As they were engaged for four concerts per week, this made their compensation \$40

per week. The leaders in Central Park, playing two concerts per week, received as compensation \$50 per week.

- 7 No, this Department does not think a large band under one conductor for chief occasions, split up into two bands for smaller parks, practicable.
- 8 The Secretary of the Park Board, Mr. Louis W. Fehr, supervises the programs and attends concerts for purposes of general supervision.
- 9 This year the Department furnished one hundred and thirty-six concerts.
- 10 The contract for concerts in Central Park with this Department provides for a rehearsal preceding each concert.
- 11 It is the policy of this Department to encourage the better class of music, and the programs are built up with a view to musical education. However, this Department believes it unwise to lose sight of the fact that many people attend the concerts purely for diversion, and because the concerts afford them an excuse for gathering together in large numbers. For that reason the better class of popular music is placed on the programs to balance, with a view to making the programs appeal to all classes of the public. The character of the encore, whether classical or popular music, depends on the neighborhood in which the concerts are given. In many neighborhoods classical music is given as encores.
- 12 The number of men in the Musical Mutual Protective Union is about 6,000.
- 13 The people do not generally sing when the bands play "America" or "Star Spangled Banner." This year, however, the Department gave a permit for choral singing in the parks by the public. This has been very successful. Last night and night before the season was concluded by a "Song and Light Concert," which was attended by 60,000 people. In many of the parks subsidiary choruses have been built up. All this has been encouraged by the Hon. Cabot Ward, Commissioner of Parks, Manhattan and Richmond.
- 14 This Department has printed through the "City Record" programs for each concert given under its auspices. These programs are placed in the hands of the public by park employees. I enclose herewith sample programs of the Naham Franko concert, West Side Municipal Band, East Side Municipal Band, Up-Town Municipal Band, and Down-Town Municipal Band. I am sending you, under separate cover, copy of Annual Report for 1914, believing you will find the music section interesting.
- 15 The experience of this Department is strongly in favor of municipalizing band music. It is possible to furnish better music and a better spirit is obtained. Commissioner Ward has gone thoroughly into the matter in this report.

The size of this City is such that not only one, but several municipal bands are necessary. If the appropriation had been sufficient the Department would have continued the practice of having its municipal bands play seven times a week instead of four times a week, as was done in 1915.

Very truly yours, (Signed) ROBERT F. VALENTINE,  
Acting Commissioner of Parks, Manhattan and Richmond.

## EPILOGUE

The hugeness of our municipal schemes is enough to fill our American minds with unmatchable joy. In fact, it plays a large part—this hugeness—in handling the success end. Nothing succeeds like immensity when it is successful. Look at the recent San Antonio Christmas celebration. It would make old Berlioz turn dark-green with envy to see the bands of the Nineteenth Infantry, the Twenty-seventh Infantry, the Sixteenth Cavalry, the Seventh Field Artillery, the First Missouri Infantry, the Third Illinois Infantry, the Fourth Illinois Infantry, the Seventh Illinois Infantry, the First Wisconsin Infantry, the Second Wisconsin Infantry, the West Virginia Infantry, the First Alabama Infantry, the Washington (D. C.) Infantry, and a great special band of one hundred and forty-two musicians. Also, the San Antonio Orchestra, a chorus of over five hundred soldiers, the Municipal Chorus and the soloists—in all eleven hundred and forty-seven musicians. The audience was made up of twenty-five thousand persons.

Then we have New York with its tidal wave of Community music. Sixty thousand for an audience last September. Notice the evangelistic terminology used by the reporters: "thirty thousand hit the trail the first evening and sang." Just think of it: sang!

We have railroad and shop workers everywhere organising; into bands especially. One of the best amateur bands I know is made up of men who are at rough work all day.

Department stores organise choruses and sing the best music there is, with the best orchestras there are. What wonderful unification of our country's resources! It is as if some mighty power was getting ready for a large crop of great geniuses and was now creating the audiences to respond to them and also to stimulate them.

And what does all this wonderful musical activity mean? What I have set down is only the municipal portion. We have titles like the following coming out in our daily papers and musical journals constantly: U. S. Government helps cause of Community Singing; The University of Kansas or some other University organising choruses in Forty to Fifty Towns; Atlanta this and Memphis that, etc., etc., etc. Read our music papers. What I would have you notice is that America is coming and coming fast; that there are big, broad, brotherly, socialised musical groups bent on having a good musical present so that we may have an

amazing future. Our future is assured, for we are making the material out of which geniuses come, viz., a large musical nucleus for inheritance. Also, we are making the stuff out of which geniuses derive their nourishment, a great audience made into a knowing audience by the actual doing. The creative power of the people is the thing.

We are passing from the patriarchal control of things to municipal encouragement, which brings more people into the doing. There is a new consciousness being revealed, as one of our very much awake women put it. We are getting past the time when we had the habit of simply being spectators. We are finding ourselves and teaching others to find themselves. We get out and say, let us be it and do it.

We are also getting over what might be termed the warm weather habit which said, 'Nothing good should be given in the Summer. Cold weather is the stimulator.' Well, you and I know that the advancement of the quality of music in the parks and the birth of societies like the New York Civic Orchestral Society, have put the veto on cheap stuff because the mercury is high. (Incidentally the prices are low,—from ten cents up.)

We not only are doing things but, what is so dear to an American heart, we are making it pay. We long ago learned that good things pay in some kind of coin: the coin of health, the coin of morals, the coin of happiness, the coin of friendliness, all of which have a fashion of ultimately putting money in the purse of the people at large, if we care to push it to that point.

Recently I had an interesting conversation with the director of one of the largest community choruses in America. One new angle was brought out: namely, that certain sexual energy which has been set loose by the conditions of present day feminism has a distinct and definite outlet for women in the singing with the crowd. Certainly a very interesting theory and which, while we can force that theory too violently, we believe works out satisfactorily in practice. Surely, the close, warm, unified effort and the contact of men and women will take away loneliness and exercise the activity of the average person to physical and moral health. That is, energy has an outlet, the one thing needful. Waste of energy is due to lack of tendency. Just as the play of our youngsters is directed, so the activity of adults is given a turn into human channels.

Some of the weak points in the program of the people as given by the enthusiasts need also to be considered.

The greatest of all their fallacies is a belittling of technical standard, substituting therefor a norm based on sociological necessity. Underrating of artistry—which is technical efficiency—will never lead to vital art or permanent art-force. The power of the people tends to form only the basis for the generation of genius rather than to make every man think he is an artist and that his work is necessarily an art-product. If we believe that the people's work will take the place of the higher musical perfection, we are losing sight of the humanising tendency of the beauty of the cathedral in thinking abstractly of the people for whom it was made. The crowd can build a cathedral neither of stone nor tone. If attempt is made to substitute crowd work for skilled artisans' work the thing reared will tumble into ruins, no matter how valuable a humaniser the attempt. It is childish to get end and means confused, for the permanence of the great work is the vital contribution to the people's life.

Many, many holders of the community idea are manifestly in error when they decry this artistry. Artistry is only the thing that stands as the thing to be attained. As John Stuart Mill put it, The beautiful is the good made perfect. The singing of the masses and beautiful singing are different. Opera, symphonic music and all so-called "high" things in art are not only for the elect—as some writers have averred—with "the people" left out. For a given generation certain great works may be sealed, but the next generation profits thereby in the strictest of community senses. We must recognise the difference between the people becoming leavened and the people creating a Fine Art—the latter a final and specially urgent necessity. Evangelism is a method, not a result. A nation cannot get along without its private, highly skilled, isolated, apparently selfish "laboratory" workers. The ultimate end of such workers' work is The People. The lonely chemist may be a national saviour. Entirely too many Americans profess that they who serve the people just now, right off, instanter, are the only ones who are human, are the only ones who serve. The few still continue and will continue to think for the many and serve the many. We could not organise into results were that not so. That is the reason that we need idealists as conductors. One of the community conductors said that the "people would not sing a bad thing." That is not true. They will sing most anything good, bad or indifferent that their conductor submits, if he submits it in the right spirit. The conductor selects and the people follow. No matter how democratised we become, leaders are leaders.

In conclusion, let us add that the popular out-of-door performances in summer from the highest art standpoint—which I always insist will later be the peoples' standpoint—are a delusion and a snare from the view of acoustics. Our open-air problems in acoustics have never been worked out, never solved. Music is not an art which is endurable for any length of time when only rough hewn lines are audible. It becomes monotonous. It is like architecture in that the highest periods are those in which breadth plus beauty of detail are in accord.

If we keep before us the essentials of Art and its activities on the one hand and the development of the people in the fullest sense on the other, we shall find that both Art and the people will come to their fullest mutual growth and interactive power. We are now ready to use the force of the world spirit so marked in our wonderful country.

With the full growth of the community life we shall have reason more and more to believe in America with the faith and poetry of Whitman:

*Fecund America! Today  
Thou art all over set in births and joys!  
Thou groan'st with riches! thy wealth clothes thee as with a swathing garment!  
Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions!  
A myriad-twining life, like interlacing vines, binds all thy vast demesne!  
As some huge ship, freighted to water's edge, thou ridest into port!  
As rain falls from the heaven, and vapors rise from earth, so have the precious values fallen upon thee, and risen out of thee!  
Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!*